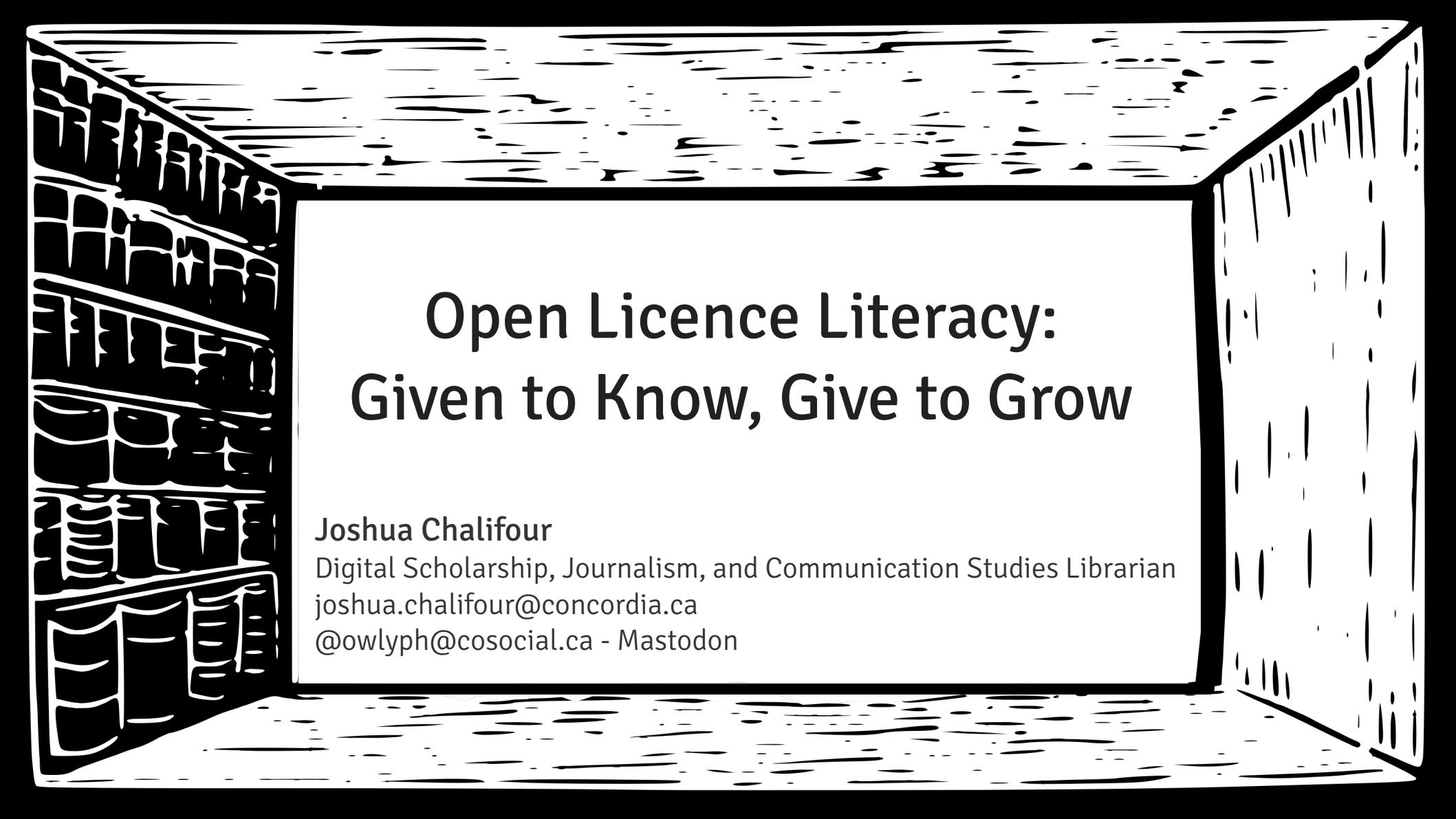




Open Licence Literacy: Given to Know, Give to Grow

Joshua Chalifour

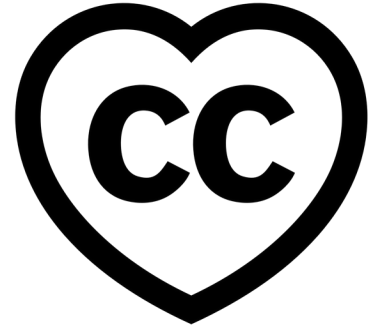
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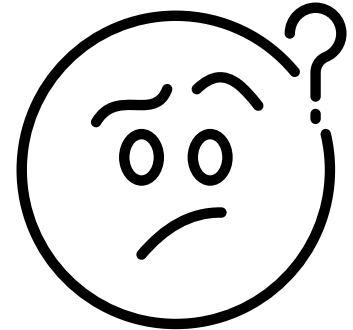
[@owlyph@cosocial.ca](#) - Mastodon

Rationale

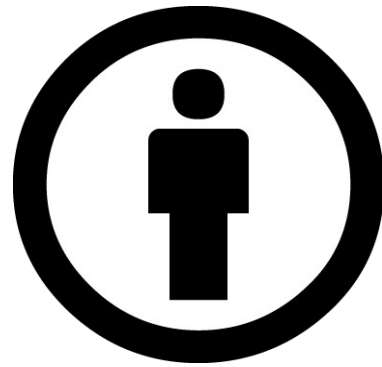
Consider the
licence:
rights & consequences
to our info ecosystem



or



Creative Commons conditions (rights)



BY

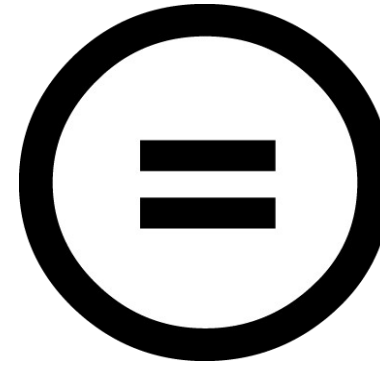
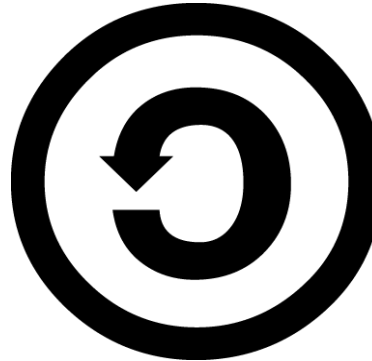


Attribution

Share Alike



SA



ND

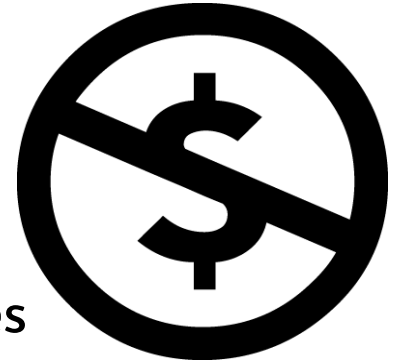


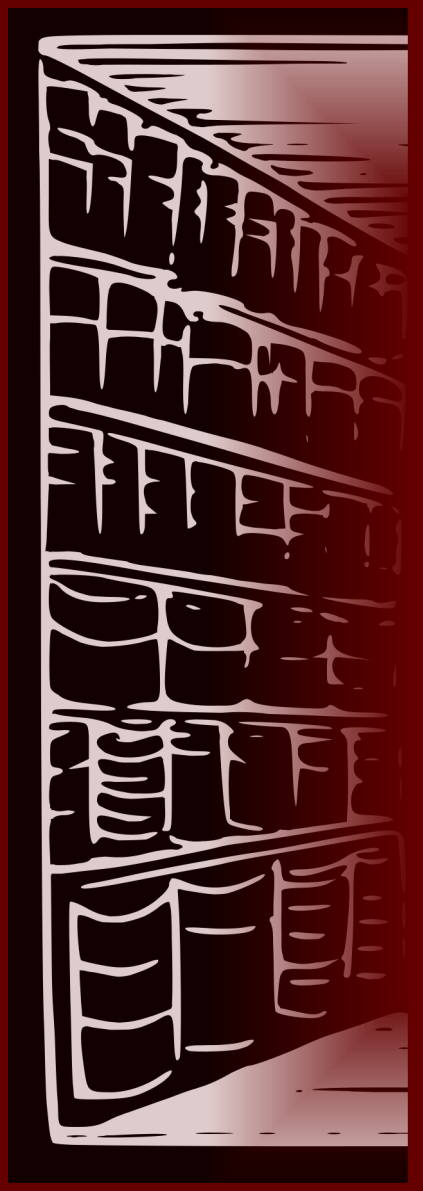
No Derivatives

Non-Commercial



NC





Scenario 1

A journalism student is a budding political cartoonist and created a powerful image. She wants it to reach as many people as possible. Not just for the sake of the message, but gaining recognition could also support her future career.

- Who do I need to reach?
- How will they access it?



Scenario 2

Together, epidemiologists and researchers from a university, public health agency, and a pharmaceutical company completed new research on a deadly virus. They want experts anywhere in the world to learn about their findings in order to prevent the virus from spreading.

- What is the potential for the impact of my work?
- Who can afford access?
- How could commercial incentives influence the goal?



Scenario 3

An author wrote an experimental, electronic novel about an AI researcher that devises a spooky new technique for machine learning. He found some interactive software code on the Internet that he would like to distribute with the novel to enhance the readers' experience.

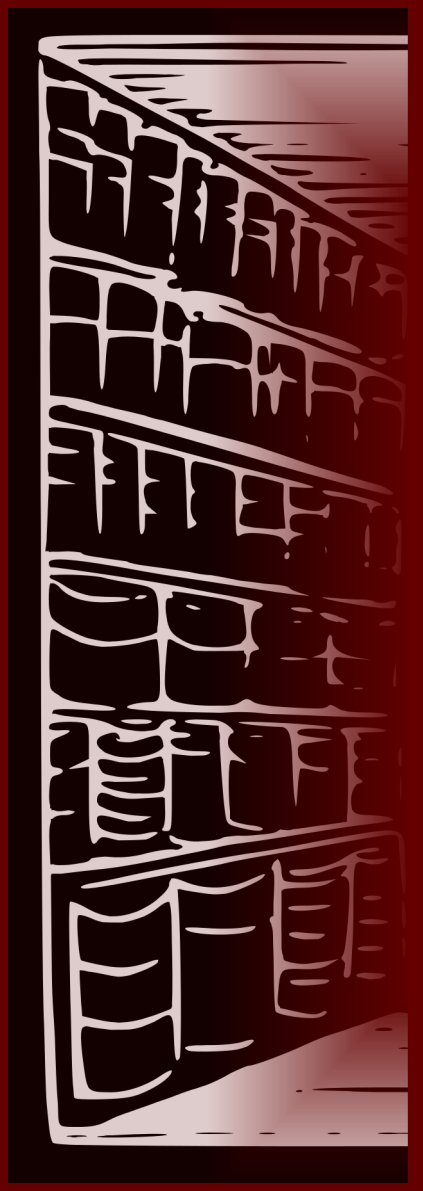
- Can I use this in my work?
- What will happen to my work in the future?



Scenario 4

A team of ecologists are ready to publish their research about the effects of clear-cutting on British Columbia's Great Bear rainforest. Their dataset includes geospatial coordinates of sacred Indigenous lands.

- Should I be the one conferring rights?
- What permission do I need to publish info?



Motivatation and impact

In addition to a licence that helps us carry forward our motives, we need to consider the greater context of its impact.



Information literacy & licensing

1. Authority Is Constructed and Contextual

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

Association of College and Research Libraries. "Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education." American Library Association, February 9, 2015.
<http://www.ala.org/acrl/standards/ilframework>.



Information literacy & licensing

1. Authority Is Constructed and Contextual

2. Information Creation as a Process

3.

4.

5.

6.



Information literacy & licensing

1. Authority Is Constructed and Contextual
2. Information Creation as a Process
3. Information Has Value
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.



Information literacy & licensing

1. Authority Is Constructed and Contextual
2. Information Creation as a Process
3. Information Has Value
4. Research as Inquiry
- 5.
- 6.



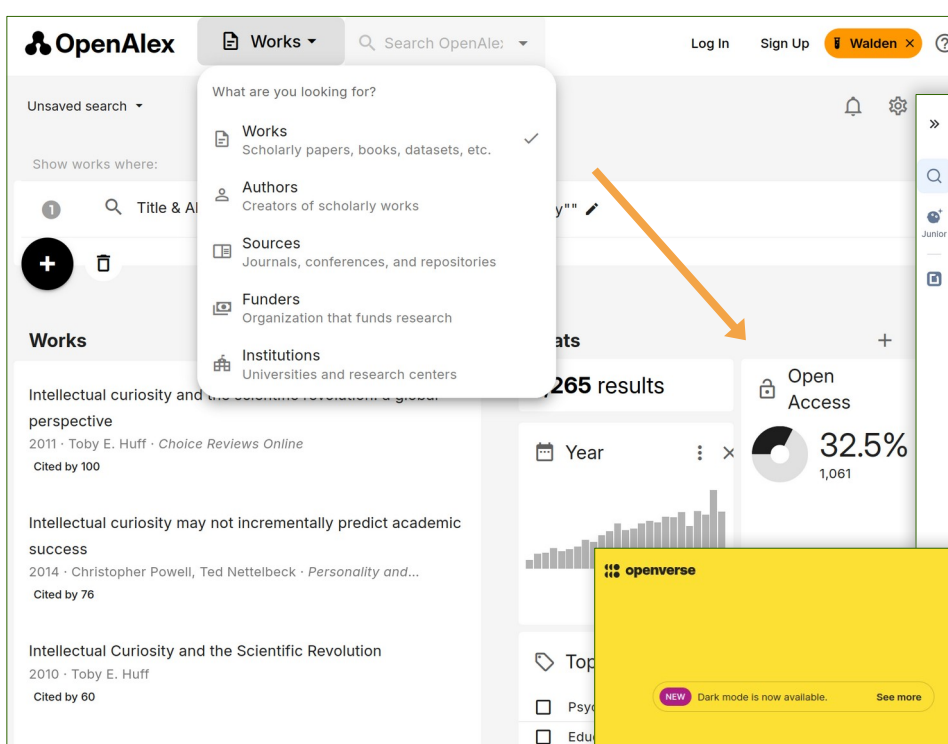
Information literacy & licensing

1. Authority Is Constructed and Contextual
2. Information Creation as a Process
3. Information Has Value
4. Research as Inquiry
5. Scholarship as Conversation
- 6.



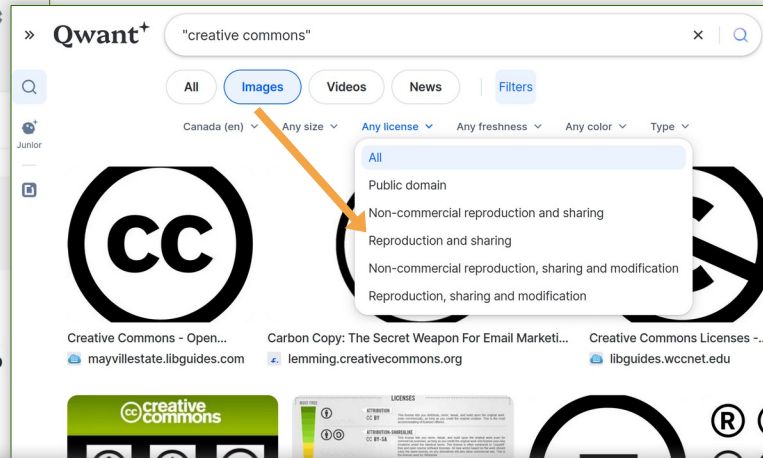
Information literacy & licensing

1. Authority Is Constructed and Contextual
2. Information Creation as a Process
3. Information Has Value
4. Research as Inquiry
5. Scholarship as Conversation
6. Searching as Strategic Exploration



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Qwant.com for images with specific rights



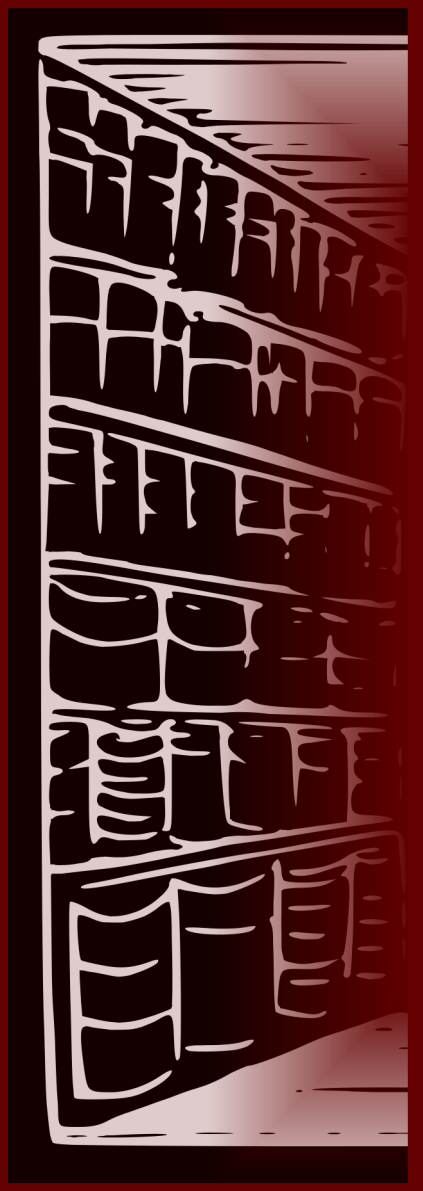
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Other licences for other rights & motivations

Commons-based reciprocity licenses

- Peer Production License
- Platform Commons License

Ethical licences

- Nonviolent Public License
- At The Root
- Hippocratic License
(aligns free and open source software with human rights)

- Free and open source software licences + Commons Clause
- Open Data Commons (data-specific)
- Open Font Licence
- Nwulite Obodo Open Data (African)
- Licence libres du Québec (LiLiQ)
- Open Government Licence (Canada)
- Contributor Covenant
(community conduct)
- Spectrum Licence
(Concordia's research repository)

Information literacy is needed for open licences





Related resources & bibliographic information

Association of College and Research Libraries. "Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education." American Library Association, February 9, 2015. <http://www.ala.org/acrl/standards/ilframework>.

Brunelle, Zachary, Jonathan Mann, and Utopian Turtletop Productions. *Paywall: The Business of Scholarship*. Edited by Russell Stone. [Potsdam, New York]: Utopian Turtletop Productions, 2018. <https://concordiauniversity.on.worldcat.org/oclc/1051042159>.

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- GNU/Linux operating system → GPL v2 and a variety of other FOSS licences.

Thank you

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Joshua Chalifour

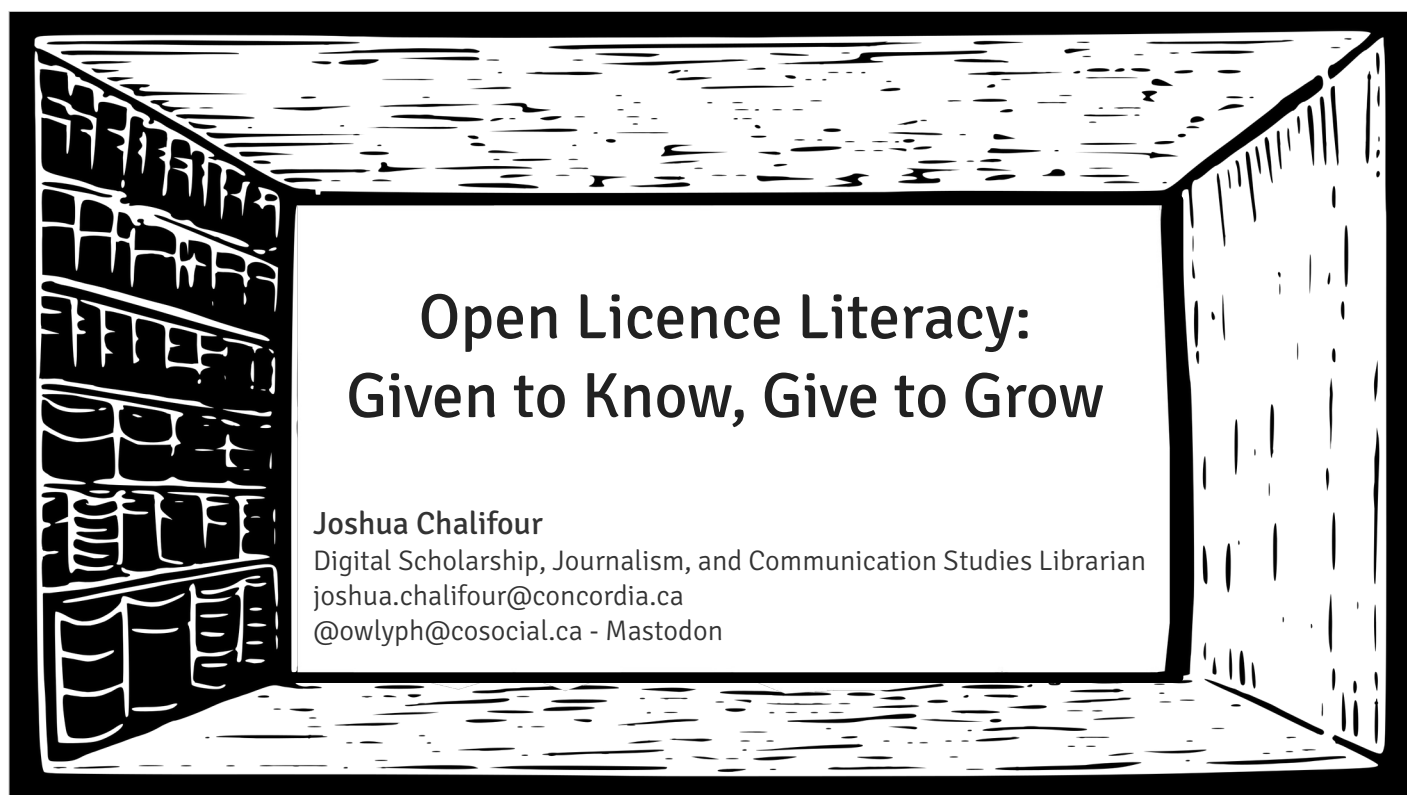
Digital Scholarship, Journalism, and Communication Studies Librarian

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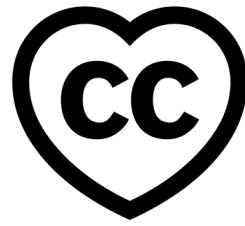
Abstract:

Joshua Chalifour will explore one of many ways that academic libraries can support researchers in adopting open practices. He will focus on the value of improving literacy in open licensing. Drawing from his experience as Digital Scholarship Librarian and founding member of Concordia's Open Science Working Group, he will discuss how open licensing bolsters the scholarly ecosystem and extends into public and private sectors. The rights granted through open licences have ramifications for peoples' information seeking, research, creation, and sharing practices, which underpin open scholarship. Although applying and using open access licences appears simple on the surface, people frequently misunderstand what these licences assert. Libraries can serve as catalysts for cultural change, providing essential technical and practical support for open scholarship. One way in which libraries support this is through an information literacy approach that helps people make sense of potential outcomes through conscientious decision-making around licences.

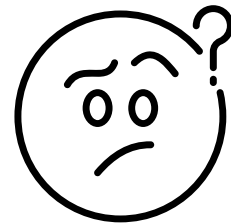


Rationale

Consider the
licence:
rights & consequences
to our info ecosystem



or



Within open scholarship, librarians promote open access, help people navigate publication rights, advocate for open infrastructure, and we're heavily implicated in the technological elements of research and learning.

Licensing is something that spans those areas of work. When used well, it can underpin a lot of possibilities for finding, accessing, creating, and preserving scholarly work.

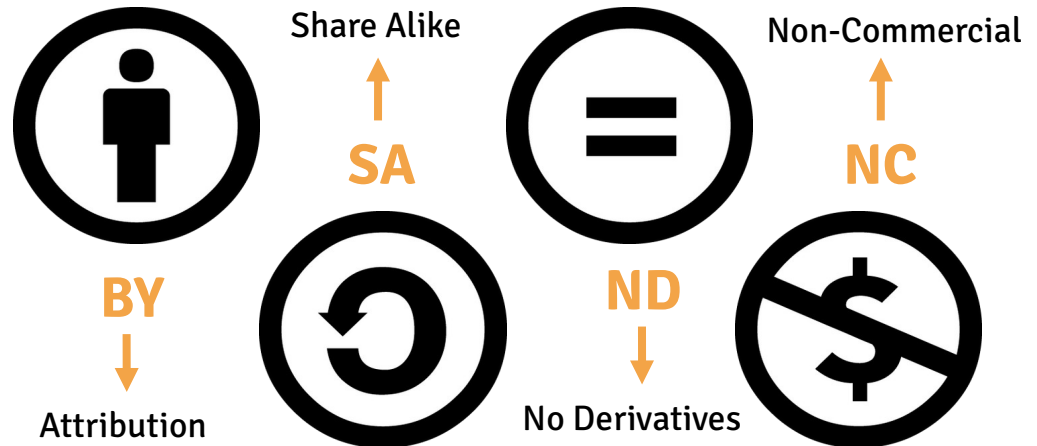
I've noticed a problem, in that people aren't very confident in their knowledge of how open licence rights work. I think our work in the realm of ****information literacy**** provides a useful approach to that problem.

We need to improve understanding of information rights and restrictions in order to help people enculturate their own their practices with open scholarship.

Over the next few minutes I'll talk about what this sort of literacy involves and hopefully inspire some ideas about what more we might do.



Creative Commons conditions (rights)



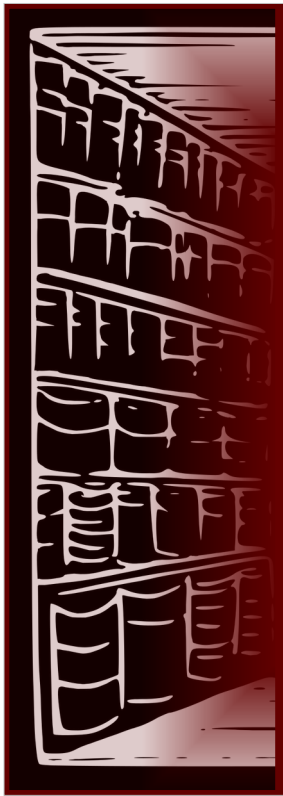
Creative Commons conditions icons available from <https://creativecommons.org/about/downloads>

Creative Commons licences provide for four conditions (essentially rights), which are:

- Attribution to ensure we know who authored a work
- Share Alike to require that permissions get passed along to others
- No Derivatives to prevent the distribution of modifications to a work
- and Non-commercial to allow distribution only in contexts that are not, for profit

We can combine these conditions in various ways to create six different licences.

Applying and using open access licences, such as these, can appear simple on the surface. However people often misunderstand what these licences assert. The skills to consider sometimes far-reaching licensing consequences can extend into professional careers even outside academia.



Scenario 1

A journalism student is a budding political cartoonist and created a powerful image. She wants it to reach as many people as possible. Not just for the sake of the message, but gaining recognition could also support her future career.

- Who do I need to reach?
- How will they access it?

I regularly teach a workshop on finding and making open scholarship with Creative Commons licenses. During one part of the class I pose hypothetical scenarios to the participants and I ask them to vote and then debate which licences would suit each scenario the best, if at all.

I never see perfect agreement, which is good. There are a lot of grey areas in the possible outcomes. When participants reflect on the motivations the people in each scenario have, they envision different ways that the licences could support those.

I'd like to share four of these scenarios. I'll refer to them later in context with information literacy skills.

Here's the first:

When thinking about her motivations for sharing her work, she might wonder:

- Who do I need to reach?
- How will they access it?

Those questions of access involve different media, different platforms, even technical capacities, which are directly supported by a system of rights that could smooth or prohibit distributing her work.



Scenario 2

Together, epidemiologists and researchers from a university, public health agency, and a pharmaceutical company completed new research on a deadly virus. They want experts anywhere in the world to learn about their findings in order to prevent the virus from spreading.

- What is the potential for the impact of my work?
- Who can afford access?
- How could commercial incentives influence the goal?

They might question their approach to disseminating the info based on questions like:

- potential impact
- affordability of access
- commercial incentives

This scenario presents a complicated issue, where the researchers want to minimise the possibility of a terrible thing happening. Depending on where they're based they probably have certain publishing responsibilities. We also know that when there is work from the private sector, there's going to be an important financial consideration.

Licence rights define ways that those requirements can play out.



Scenario 3

An author wrote an experimental, electronic novel about an AI researcher that devises a spooky new technique for machine learning. He found some interactive software code on the Internet that he would like to distribute with the novel to enhance the readers' experience.

- Can I use this in my work?
- What will happen to my work in the future?

The author wants to make something innovative and use or modify other peoples' code to do so. That's a real benefit but it raises tricky issues about redistributing it, selling it, and even its longevity. Will people be able to access it for example, from a library, twenty, or more years down the line?



Scenario 4

A team of ecologists are ready to publish their research about the effects of clear-cutting on British Columbia's Great Bear rainforest. Their dataset includes geospatial coordinates of sacred Indigenous lands.

- Should I be the one conferring rights?
- What permission do I need to publish info?

We often tend to think of making things open, as a good in and of itself. That might not always be so clear. How might a licence's permissions relate to the First Nations principles of OCAP (ownership, control, access, and possession)?

We need to be conscientious of what licences enable and be judicious with their appropriate use.



Motivatation and impact

In addition to a licence that helps us carry forward our motives, we need to consider the greater context of its impact.

When we think about the scholarly research life-cycle, from ideas, collaborations, searching for background, precursors, related works, to developing a project, reporting on results, and ensuring it is well-preserved for people to access, there's a whole information ecosystem affected by the rights of the licences we use.

Broadly speaking, information literacy refers to aptitudes or critical thinking skills and habits about assessing information. It includes the processes for creating new information and the contexts of the systems in which we encounter information.

The Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education from the ACRL is a pedagogical resource that provides six frames for developing knowledge practices and dispositions in how people interact with information.

There isn't time in this presentation for a comprehensive discussion of its frames but what I'd like to do next is highlight a few ways that each can apply in the context of learning about open licences.



Information literacy & licensing

1. Authority Is Constructed and Contextual

- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.

Association of College and Research Libraries. "Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education." American Library Association, February 9, 2015.
<http://www.ala.org/acrl/standards/ilframework>.

1. Authority Is Constructed and Contextual

- This refers to how we perceive and make sense of the authority of people that have created the information we're dealing with. It varies depending on the context that we encounter it.
- As we consider both the information we're given by a licence and how we want to make our own works available, we can reflect on what those permissions say about the authority of the work's creator.
- Being associated with a journal due to its disciplinary clout or reach is one context for authority. We know that papers published under open access licences tend to get cited more frequently, which is another context of authority.
- In the scenario of the budding political cartoonist, imagine she licences her image so that people easily access and spread it through social media. It provokes politicians to comment. This all creates a context for perceiving the artist's authority.
- Many open licences propagate permissions from one person to the next. This too could be perceived as a form of authority invested through the licence by the author. In the case of the Creative Commons licences, I'm referring of course to their "Share-alike" condition.



Information literacy & licensing

1. Authority Is Constructed and Contextual

2. Information Creation as a Process

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2. Information Creation as a Process

- This aims to get people considering techniques and forms of media that support various processes of information creation. It includes thinking about how things in the creation process impact the perceived value of the information.

- Imagine a licence that permits people to make derivatives of a work. When understanding the context of such information, it's good to have a sense of the underlying process.

- For example, an open educational resource could be created by a professor then adapted for the specific needs of a course at another university. In my political cartoonist scenario imagine her social network modifying the image to have new meanings or extend its reach. In the scenario of the author and the experimental ebook, the author used open source code that someone developed for a specific purpose, but now its context has changed to support the purposes of his novel.

- The information in those cases didn't come as-is from one source. It's more fully understood through the ways people changed it. To engage in those sorts of processes, we need to know how the licence conditions enable them.



Information literacy & licensing

1. Authority Is Constructed and Contextual
2. Information Creation as a Process
3. Information Has Value
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<http://www.ala.org/acrl/standards/ilframework>.

3. Information has Value

- This addresses different dimensions of value, which include everything from understanding attribution requirements and copyright, to a range of commercial concerns and how these affect people's access to information.
- It's impossible to select licences for use on something you make without engaging with our copyright system. Copyright gives us the legal capacity to apply the licences. In my experience, this aspect confuses many people.
- In the scenario of the epidemiologists and the virus, do we think that a licence prohibiting commercial use will be most beneficial because it reduces barriers to access the information? Or, do we think that a licence allowing commercial use would be better because profit could incentivize companies to develop cures?
- When someone applies an open licence to their work, they assert that others should be able to access it. The author needs to reflect on the value of freeing information in relation to the privileges for accessing it.



Information literacy & licensing

1. Authority Is Constructed and Contextual
2. Information Creation as a Process
3. Information Has Value
4. Research as Inquiry
- 5.
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Association of College and Research Libraries. "Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education." American Library Association, February 9, 2015.
<http://www.ala.org/acrl/standards/ilframework>.

4. Research as Inquiry

- This addresses questioning and the iterative aspects of doing research. The more broadly that information can be accessed, the more it can be questioned and provoke directions of research.

- Understanding what's needed for the sorts of investigation, debates, and collaborations that are part of the research process lends weight to an environment supported by open licences.

- Back to my scenario of the author wanting to distribute some code. Software code ****is information****. We might imagine this scenario as one, perhaps narrow case, exemplifying where research as inquiry could come in to play. When code is openly licensed, a person can examine it and learn from it in order to change it or otherwise experiment with it toward their own purposes.

- A licence supporting that openness, that ability to derive something new, also supports iteration and supports the interaction of people pursuing that information. Prohibiting access, curtails intellectual curiosity.



Information literacy & licensing

1. Authority Is Constructed and Contextual
2. Information Creation as a Process
3. Information Has Value
4. Research as Inquiry
5. Scholarship as Conversation
- 6.

Association of College and Research Libraries. "Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education." American Library Association, February 9, 2015.
<http://www.ala.org/acrl/standards/ilframework>.

5. Scholarship as Conversation

- In this frame, we recognise how there are many voices and perspectives that contribute to different research areas. It includes the notion of accepting a complex and involved range of discourse.

We often end up with a few perspectives receiving undue privilege or exposure. This is in part because restrictive rights are frequently imposed by legacy publishing and distribution regimes.

- For example, there's a scene in this film, [Paywall: the business of scholarship](<https://concordiauniversity.on.worldcat.org/oclc/1051042159>), that made an impression on me. A professor, Brian Nosek, at the University of Virginia (and Director of the Center for Open Science) talked about an experience he had visiting the University of Belgrade. He described how he was talking to the students there and discovered that most of them were doing their theses on essentially the same subject matter. He asked why they all chose to work on aspects of the same thing and their response was that that was where they had access to the literature.

- That scene calls attention to how restricted the scholarly conversation becomes when licences make access to research, unaffordable.

- The scene also shows how beneficial it would be for someone to licence their own work in order to expand its potential reach. How, if we want to include more voices around the world, we need to consider the ways that restrictive permissions or proprietary licenses privilege those who can pay.



Information literacy & licensing

1. Authority Is Constructed and Contextual
2. Information Creation as a Process
3. Information Has Value
4. Research as Inquiry
5. Scholarship as Conversation
6. Searching as Strategic Exploration

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<http://www.ala.org/acrl/standards/ilframework>.

6. Searching as Strategic Exploration

- A person's search process changes when they know that a particular licence will let them alter a work for their own use, or sell it, or do something else with it. They can use licensing knowledge to take advantage of search tools' features that guide them to the works provided with the appropriate rights.
- As a creator, it's important to know how the licence you choose can be used to propagate rights information into these tools. Will people find your work in an expensive database? In purpose-driven search tools?
- Returning to the Great Bear rainforest scenario, is it a good idea to indiscriminately distribute access to that data via search tools?

OpenAlex Works ▾ Search OpenAlex: Log In Sign Up Walden X

What are you looking for?

- Works Scholarly papers, books, datasets, etc.
- Authors Creators of scholarly works
- Sources Journals, conferences, and repositories
- Funders Organization that funds research
- Institutions Universities and research centers

Unsaved search ▾

Show works where:

Title & Author

Works

Intellectual curiosity and perspective

2011 · Toby E. Huff · Choice Reviews Online

Cited by 100

Intellectual curiosity may not incrementally predict academic success

2014 · Christopher Powell, Ted Nettelbeck · Personality and...

Cited by 76

Intellectual Curiosity and the Scientific Revolution

2010 · Toby E. Huff

Cited by 60

265 results

Open Access 32.5% 1,061

Year

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Explore more than 800 million creative works

An extensive library of free stock photos, images, and audio, available for free use.

Search for content

All content

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Qwant.com for images with specific rights

Qwant+ "creative commons"

All Images Videos News Filters

Canada (en) Any size Any license Any freshness Any color Type

CC

Public domain

Non-commercial reproduction and sharing

Reproduction and sharing

Non-commercial reproduction, sharing and modification

Reproduction, sharing and modification

openverse.org for CC licensed works

See also <https://search.creativecommons.org>

6 Continued

Search tools like OpenAlex.org, Qwant image search, and OpenVerse.org support search techniques that focus on open access-licensed content or let the user specify specific licence permissions.



Other licences for other rights & motivations

Commons-based reciprocity licenses

- Peer Production License
- Platform Commons License

Ethical licences

- Nonviolent Public License
- At The Root
- Hippocratic License
(aligns free and open source software with human rights)

- Free and open source software licences + Commons Clause
- Open Data Commons (data-specific)
- Open Font Licence
- Nwulite Obodo Open Data (African)
- Licence libres du Québec (LiLiQ)
- Open Government Licence (Canada)
- Contributor Covenant (community conduct)
- Spectrum Licence (Concordia's research repository)

Depending on the goals, it could be worth considering licences other than the Creative Commons.

Commons-based reciprocity (copyfair) licences, address a perspective in the ****value**** frame that I mentioned. Someone might choose these to support forms of mutual knowledge access and development through coops or not-for-profit entities.

- Examples include the Peer Production Licence (a fork of the Creative Commons NC licence) or the Platform Commons Licence, which is for code.

There are ethical licences such as the

- Nonviolent Public License designed to protect against forms of violence, coercion, and discrimination

- At the Root, provides similar rights to a CC licence, except these are restricted to people using it in compliance with a set of ethical standards. Those standards prohibit discrimination, environmental harm, suppression of workers' rights, and much more.

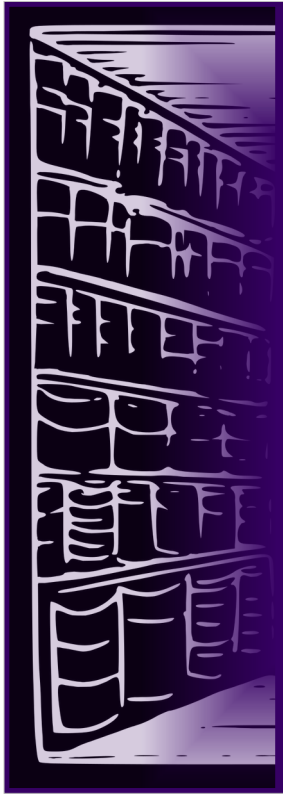
- The Hippocratic License argues that technology is not necessarily neutral and so aims to be a licence for open source software communities to ensure their work is used in alignment with human rights.

- There are hundreds of free and open source licences which focus mostly on permitting and propagating rights for studying, using, changing, and sharing software code. Many variations and philosophical differences exist among these licences.

- The Open Font Licence addresses usage elements or commercial activities of concern to typeface designers. Various data licences exist, such as those from the open data commons, which distinguish between databases and their content.

- Regional licences such as The Nwulite Obodo Open Data licence is interesting in that it calls attention to how people in African nations ought to be able to take advantage of their own data and it enables licensors to designate different terms for sharing data when they are from different parts of the world.

- The Québec government has its own open source software licensing and the government of Canada like other governments make data accessible under specific open government licences.



Information literacy is needed for open licences



I hope that I've provided enough context about library information literacy work here to show how it relates to understanding and using licences.

Working within open scholarship and open science practices necessitates reflection on what a licence does. The rights granted through open licences have consequences for peoples' information seeking, research, creation, and sharing practices.

I think that the more people understand their rights and how best to confer those to others, the better they can take advantage of and contribute to the research life-cycle.

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Related resources & bibliographic information

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